

LEGISLATURE OF ONTARIO

SECOND PARLIAMENT—SECOND SESSION.

FRIDAY, Feb. 21.

The Speaker took the chair at 3 o'clock.

PETITIONS.

The following petitions were presented :

Mr. McManus—Of Township Council, praying that no part of the township shall be incorporated in the town of Orangeville.

Mr. Lauder—Of the township of Euphrasia, respecting the surplus fund.

Also, of the Township Council of Sydenham, praying for aid to improve Meaford Harbour.

Mr. Gifford—Of D. P. McHenry and others, of Cobourg,

Three petitions respecting liquor.

ESTIMATES.

Attorney-General MOWAT laid on the table the estimates of expenditure for 1873.

THIRD READINGS.

The following Bills were read a third time and passed:—

Mr. Clarke (Wellington)—For the protection, in Ontario, of insectivorous and other birds beneficial to agriculture.

Mr. Clarke (Wellington)—To further amend the Agriculture and Arts Act.

Mr. Williams (Hamilton)—To incorporate the Hamilton Female Home, under the name of the "Home for the Friendless," at Hamilton.

Mr. Gibson—To incorporate the Superannuated Preachers' Annuitant Society in connexion with the Methodist New Connexion Church of Canada.

Mr. Hodgins—To incorporate the Toronto Financial Corporation.

Mr. Williams (Hamilton)—To incorporate the Boys' Home of the City of Hamilton.

Mr. Wilson—Respecting the Colonial Trusts Corporation (Limited).

Mr. Cameron—To amend the several Acts relating to the Toronto, Gray, and Bruce Railway Company.

THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

Hon. Mr. CROOKS rose to move that the House go into Committee to consider the supply to be granted to Her Majesty. He said that on doing so it became his duty to make the customary statement in reference to the financial affairs of the Province. In proceeding to do so he might just direct the attention of hon. members to the circumstance that they had before them in full detail all the accounts relating to the occurrences of the past year, ending on the 31st December 1872, involving the minutest details of public expenditure, under the proper heads. He might also remind hon. members that this was the second occasion on which during the sitting of the Legislature they had had placed before them the public accounts in this full and complete shape when called upon to vote the supplies for the coming year. His immediate predecessor was able during the session of 1871-72 to place the Public Accounts in this same full manner before the House then in session, in the month of January 1872. On previous occasions the House was furnished only with the Public Accounts as they were subsequently printed: because formerly the Public Accounts were not printed and published until during the recess, which intervened between the then session and the following session, and all that was submitted to the House during this its sitting, was an extract rather than a full statement of the accounts of the preceding year. This was the form in which the accounts for the year ending 31st Dec, 1870, were submitted to the Legislature. It was a small pamphlet consisting of 24 pages; the Public Accounts now submitted consisted of upwards of 150 pages. The only details which were formerly contained in the statement of the public accounts were in reference to the contingencies of the several Departments. In other respects these details were omitted from the accounts, which were made up as follows:—First, a statement of the expenditure for the ten months ending 31st October; and then another statement for the two months ending 31st December. He alluded to these circumstances in order to show to hon. members that during the past years

as full information as he now was giving had not been presented to the House, and to justify himself against any charge of delay in bringing down the accounts for the year. Hon. gentlemen would see the amount of labour which was involved after the close of the year before all the public accounts could be properly balanced and drawn up in detail, sent to the printer, the printing revised, and the account placed before hon. members in a correct shape. The short delay of five weeks, he thought, could only be spoken of as a short one, and not more than reasonable, and that no charge of delay could be made against himself or his Department. In regard to the assembling of the Committee to whom the public accounts are sent, he said that Committee had been assembled for some time, and that they had now been engaged for seven or eight days in a careful examination of the accounts, and that they would have the fullest opportunity, during the Session, of examining in the most close way every item of expenditure. With these preliminary remarks he might proceed to discuss the financial position of the Province of Ontario as it stood on the 31st December, 1872. In calling the attention of honourable members to that position, he said that the information which he proposed to convey had been mainly drawn from the statements of one of his predecessors, the honourable member for South Brant, which would always form most valuable records in the Department. That honourable gentleman had compiled in the most useful way a mass of intelligible information respecting the expenditure and receipts of the Province, and its relations with the Dominion, that could be found in no other place. He had examined the statements made in '68, '69, '70, and '71 by the hon. member; and had also had the benefit of the statement of the hon. Mr. McKenzie in February last year; and from these sources of information he was able to communicate to the House the exact position of the Province. He might also mention in connection with the sources of information which were in this way available to him that there was a further document which emanated from the hon. member for South Brant, of the most exhaustive and valuable character, namely, his final argument before the arbitrators when dealing with the settlement of Ontario's share of the excess of the debt, and in regard to their rights in reference to certain trust funds and assets of the Province of Canada. The hon. gentleman deserved, at the hands of this Province, the largest amount of praise for the exceedingly exhaustive manner in which he took up on behalf of Ontario the arguments before the arbitrators; and if one would compare the award pronounced with the argument of the member for South Brant, he must come to the conclusion that in the main that argument prevailed, even to the very figures on which the hon. gentleman argued with regard to this Province. In calling attention to this statement which he proposed to make he might concisely assume some important particulars in which the member for South Brant claimed certain allowances for this Province which were allowed by the arbitrators. It further appeared to him that the position which the hon. member for South Brant took, involving very large sums of money, was a sound one in principle, and that whatever might become of this question, and whatever further attention might be required to be paid to it, that no one was in a position to lend more valuable aid to the cause of the Province than that hon. gentleman. He proposed, in submitting this statement to the House, to put it through the same course of instruction that he himself had been obliged to go through. He had had charge of the Department for only a few months, and, in connection with other labours, he had been scarcely able to master the details as fully as he could have wished. The first point he was anxious to arrive at was the actual financial position of the Province. Considering the large amount of money invested in public undertakings which swelled the debt of this Province and the Province of Quebec, what was our position? Under the British North America Act of 1867, a stipulated amount of the debt of the two Provinces was assumed by the Dominion, and the excess over that amount devolved upon Ontario and Quebec. This excess was assumed by the arbitration to be nearly ten millions and a half. The interest on this amount was chargeable against the subsidy payable to these Provinces by the Dominion under the Confederation Act. So that, while in theory we received nearly \$1,200,000 annually from the Dominion, there stood as a first charge against that sum the interest payable by the Province on this excess of debt, which was as-